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THE STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR AFRICA (STPA)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since it was established in 1958, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), has attached more importance to the development of statistics in Africa either through the regular activities on its work programme or through various project activities financed by donor agencies in the United Nations system. In this regard, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been financing for some years now, three statistical development projects whose implementation has been entrusted to ECA's Statistics Division. Those projects are:

(a) The operational support project for the improvement and expansion of the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) which began in 1978;

(b) The Africa regional component of the United Nations Household Survey Capability Programme (AHSCP) which also began in 1978; and

(c) The project of assistance to least-developed and newly -independent countries in national accounts which began in 1979.

2. Until 1986, the three projects were implemented separately and therefore contributed severally to development in the three areas of statistics mentioned above.

3. In 1987 it was decided to adopt an integrated approach in the implementation of the three aforementioned projects under the Fourth Cycle Programme of UNDP. There is no doubt that each of the projects had, within their respective areas, contributed to the development of statistics in Africa. The integrated approach was adopted, however, to make it possible to achieve better results and better co-ordination of project activities.

4. In this paper, the main objectives pursued in the integration of statistical development activities within the context of SDPA and the various statistical programmes supported under SDPA, will be considered briefly.

II. MAJOR OBJECTIVES IN THE INTEGRATION OF STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SDPA

5. It would be helpful, first of all, to recall the objectives of the three supported SDPA programmes as pursued under the three projects mentioned earlier.

6. The Statistical Training Programme for Africa was set up to provide the Africa region, on a permanent basis, with qualified statistical personnel for national statistics bureaux. Other government services as well as parastatals and the private sector were also to benefit from STPA. A network of statistical training structures, referred to as STPA centres, are being used to achieve this objective particularly with regard to basic training in statistics. There are also associate centres located outside the Africa region which mainly provide short-term specialized training.

7. With regard to the African Household Survey Capability Programme (AHSCP), the main objective was to make African countries capable of generating a continuous flow of integrated socio-economic data (using household surveys and other sources) for development planning, policy-making and programming. In other words, the Programme aimed at assisting the countries to set up permanent structures for conducting surveys and to ensure that the data collected were correctly analyzed and presented.

8. With regard to the programme of assistance in national accounts, it should be pointed out that ECA had for several years been providing advisory services to member States before UNDP-funded project on assistance to least-developed and newly-independent countries in national accounts in 1979. In 1982, the national accounts capability programme was launched with the objective of making African countries capable of preparing and using national accounts as an integral part of their statistical development programme. Initially, the programme provided for a vast project, which unfortunately, could not be expanded for lack of external financing.

9. The major objective pursued in integrating statistical development activities within the context of SDPA was to make a greater impact on statistical development in Africa and to ensure that activities were better co-ordinated. It follows that the main objective of the SDPA project was to ensure that African statistical systems produced relevant, reliable and accurate statistics which could be placed at the disposal of those national administrative authorities responsible, among other things, for the formulation of development policies and plans, and international users, in particular within the framework of the Lagos Plan of Action and Final Act of Lagos, Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER) and the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD).

10. The strategy adopted in the SDPA integrated project consists of strengthening statistical training in three distinct areas, namely:

(a) The development of specialized post-graduate programmes in areas like agricultural statistics, national accounts and household surveys;

(b) The institution and/or expansion of middle level training, including on-the-job training for the Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa in particular; and

(c) The development of teaching materials for applied statistics.

11. With regard to household surveys, the integrated project underscores the permanent need for developing and strengthening national capabilities for effective implementation of household surveys and speedy processing and analysis of survey results. The strategy adopted in this area was one of providing technical advice on various aspects of survey operations, in particular, data processing and analysis.

12. In the area of basic economic statistics, efforts are made in the context of the integrated project to emphasize two aspects: first, greater concentration on simple systems for permanent collection of data and second, more effective ways of disseminating processed data rapidly.

13. Finally, the integrated project is designed to use national experiences in the compilation of basic economic statistics, the preparation of national accounts and household survey activities with a view to promoting the development of statistical data basis in countries of the region.

14. The SDPA project personnel included, as of 30 September 1989, two statistical training advisers (one of whom was at the same time a household survey specialist); a household survey specialist; a national accounts specialist; and a statistical data base specialist. There is also within the ECA Statistics Division a post of regional adviser in national accounts financed under the regular work programme of the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development. Moreover, as part of its contribution to the development of AMSCP, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has been providing, since 1979, one post of regional adviser in household surveys. The incumbent of that post has been mostly conducting missions to English-speaking African countries, mainly to carry out surveys on employment, incomes and household expenditure.

15. The various project specialists work as a team and do not confine themselves only to those areas in which they are directly specialized. The activities conducted during mission travel by a project specialist or adviser are followed up by another specialist

travelling on a different mission to the same country. For instance, a statistical training adviser who travels to a specific country to conduct a mission on the strengthening of on-the-job training programmes, could, at the same time, gather information on the follow-up activities undertaken by that country on the basis of recommendations made during an advisory mission by a household survey or national accounts specialist. At the level of statistical training centres, courses in applied statistics such as those relating to national accounts, sampling theory and budget-consumption are taught by SDPA project specialists. Stress is laid in those courses on the practical problems that African countries encounter in the various specialized areas.

15. Generally speaking, there is no doubt that the integrated approach being pursued under SDPA has greatly facilitated ECA's implementation of the project both from a technical and administrative standpoint.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES SUPPORTED BY SDPA

1. Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA)

17. It should be recalled that the Statistical Programme for Africa was designed to cover a ten-year period and aimed at increasing the number of trained statisticians and improving and maintaining the quality of serving statisticians. At the end of the ten years of the programme, it has been realized that the objectives pursued have not been fully achieved notwithstanding the undisputed progress made in terms of training in the Africa region.

18. Under the UNDP-financed project, it was expected that statistical training activities would become more effective when integrated into the comprehensive SDPA project which also included the development of capabilities in household surveys, the improvement of basic economic statistics and the development of statistical data bases.

19. In the comprehensive STPA programme, stress was laid on the following aspects:

(a) Training of trainers;

(b) Support of post-graduate programmes;

(c) Middle-level/on-the-job training with particular reference to Portuguese-speaking African countries;

(d) Advancement of Women in statistical training; and

(e) Participation of the private sector.

20. With regard to the training of trainers, the SDPA project planned for the granting of 10 fellowships for the initial or refresher training of faculty staff in those centres participating in the STPA programme. From the beginning of the project todate, six fellowships have been granted. Two went to French-speaking faculty staff and two to English-speaking faculty staff. In this exercise, priority would be accorded to centres developing post-graduate teaching programmes as is being done at ENSEA in Abidjan, the Department of Statistics at the University of Ibadan and ISAE in Kampala.

21. On-the-job/middle-level training of statistical personnel has also been given high priority under the SDPA project. This is because, when the SDPA programme was evaluated, African countries in general and French-speaking countries in particular were found to be severely lacking middle level statistical personnel within their national statistical services. Remedial action was taken to cope with the situation before the integrared SDPA project was adopted. That action should continue. It concerned the institution and/or strengthening of national statistical training programmes providing on-the-job and middle-level training. The statistical training advisors are doing this through:

(a) Advisory missions conducted with a view to setting up or strengthening training programmes;

(b) Training missions conducted in support of on-the-job training programmes in the English-speaking countries or national centres for training of middle-level statistical personnel in the French-speaking countries; and

(c) The organization of seminars (two of which have already been held in 1988, one in Abidjan, the other in Harare) for trainers involved in training statistical personnel on the job or at the middle level.

22. The training of statistical personnel for Portuguese-speaking countries has been accorded very high priority under the integrated SDPA project. Indeed, the activities initiated under the second phase of the SDPA programme have been intensively pursued within the context of the integrated SDPA project. With the technical and financial co-operation of the European Economic Community:

(a) A joint EEC/Portugal/ECA mission was fielded to Guinea-Bissau in December 1987 to evaluate the feasibility of a project on the establishment of a middle-level statistical training centre to be used by Guinea-Bissau, Cape-Verde and Sao-Tome and Principe;

(b) A meeting was organized in Luxembourg in February 1988 bringing together officials of five Portuguese-speaking African countries to discuss the draft guide syllabus for middle-level training prepared by ECA as well as the proposed opening of a higher level statistical training school in Lisbon;

(c) Another meeting was organized in Lisbon in November 1988 with a view to considering the status structure, curriculum and admission requirements of the proposed statistical training school in Lisbon; and

(d) An ECA mission visited Sao-Tome in December 1988 in order to prepare a project document on the establishment of a national programme for training substantive staff in statistics.

23. Particular attention has been paid to the role of women in statistical training. For example, efforts are being made to ensure that at least 25 per cent of candidates granted study fellowships for training as trainers are women. STPA centres are also being encouraged to admit the greatest possible number of female students so that at least 10 per cent of statisticians over the period 1987-1991 would be women. Similarly, African Governments are being encouraged to designate female statisticians to participate in the seminars and training workshops organized under the SDPA programme. The idea is to ensure that at least 10 per cent of participants in those meetings would be women.

24. It has been felt that the negative effects of the exodus of statistical personnel to the private sector could be attenuated if special training programmes could be organized for that sector. Several countries of the region are already reserving places for students sponsored by the private sector, particularly at the middle level. This practice is being encouraged under the integrated SDPA project. At the same time, efforts are being made to reduce the workload with which the private sector has to cope with in surveys/statistical reports through the use of simple questionnaires and stratified sampling.

25. Stress continues to be laid, within the integrated SDPA project, on ensuring that teaching programmes are prepared in concert and information disseminated on all statistical activities of interest to the Africa region. Accordingly, the guide syllabus for middle-level statistical training was revised in 1989. Also, the 1987 and 1989 editions of the Directory of STPA and Associate Centres and the Directory of Non-STPA Centres were published together with the two editions of STPA News issued each year.

26. It is acknowledged that STPA is an excellent example of co-operation among African Governments, several national and international organizations and institutions as well as various

multilateral and bilateral donor agencies. In particular it is expected that the second phase of the project on EEC assistance to STPA will become operational in 1990 when the Lome IV Convention associating African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States with the European Economic Community, enters into force.

2. African household survey capability programme (AHSCP)

27. Currently, the following 19 countries are participating actively in AHSCP. They are: Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition to this, project proposals have been formulated for the following countries, Burundi, Congo, Cote d'Ivore, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, the Niger, Senegal, Swaziland and the United Republic of Tanzania. The main areas of study are household expenditure and consumption, agriculture, economic activity and employment, demography and health. The informal sector which has been introduced only recently appears to be set for speedy promotion in the coming years.

28. Some problems continue to hold back the development of national survey programmes. The first, being financial, concerns the lack of funds for participating countries to institute such household survey programmes as are suited to their needs. The lack of skilled manpower constitutes another problem because of the high turnover of staff in national statistical services. STPA is making efforts to remedy this situation. The third problem is technical and has to do with bottlenecks in the computer processing of survey data. The progress made recently in micro-computer capabilities and the availability of high-performance software packages specially designed for processing survey data have enabled certain countries to advance.

29. The regional advisory service set up since 1978 at ECA with UNDP financing has two household survey specialists. Budget restrictions reduced this number to one in 1986. However, an ILO Regional Adviser in household surveys has been recruited since 1979. The team was strengthened from 1985 to 1988 by a data processing specialist provided by the Federal Republic of Germany under a bilateral agreement with ECA. Some 20 advisory missions coming under the five following headings are conducted every year:

(a) Preliminary evaluation of conditions for the organization of survey programmes;

(b) Formulation of national project proposals;

(c) Assistance with survey design and management;

(d) Methodological assistance in sample plans, concepts and definitions, data collection, questionnaire preparation, tabulation, processing, analysis and publication of survey results; and

(e) Assistance with the advanced formal and informal training of survey personnel, including on-the-job training.

30. These missions are conducted in a co-ordinated manner with the United Nations Statistical Office, ILO, FAO, UNICEF and, to the extent possible, with the World Bank. Furthermore, the regional advisers have drafted substantive documents on various aspects of surveys.

31. Proper training in survey techniques based essentially on the sharing of experiences has been accorded particular attention. In this regard, a workshop on the technical and administrative aspects of household surveys was organized in 1986 for French-speaking African countries. Two working group meetings on survey data processing were organized in 1987. One was for English-speaking African countries and the other for French-speaking African countries. A bilingual working group meeting on household survey was also organized in 1989.

32. The last meeting of the working group formulated recommendations which are submitted to the sixth session of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers. Particular mention could be made of the recommendations for continuation of the Statistical Development Programme for Africa, increase of the number of the regional team taking part in AHSCP and the maintenance of the post of the ILO regional adviser in household surveys within ECA so that close co-operation with ILO under AHSCP would be maintained. The other recommendations concern the intensified training of statistical personnel at all levels, (in particular survey personnel); the organization of seminars and training workshops on specific themes; in co-operation with STPA; the continued development of methodology for the collection, processing, analysis and use of demographic and integrated socio-economic data; the establishment in Africa of a research and experimentation programme; and the dissemination of information concerning African household survey experiences and recent publications on survey methodology.

33. The working group also requests the Joint Conference to consider comprehensively the issue of strengthening co-operation at the national level among governmental organizations with a view to securing a more effective integration of household survey programmes. Finally, the group recommended that co-ordination of the international assistance provided by the various multilateral

and bilateral agencies in the field of household surveys should be promoted at the same time as the efforts for assisting African countries to mobilize the necessary technical and financial resources for the implementation of national survey programmes are intensified.

3. Assistance to African countries in national accounts and basic economic statistics

34. For several years, ECA has been assisting African States in their preparation of national accounts and basic economic statistics. The set objectives, within the framework of the integrated SDPA project, consist of supporting and strengthening national capabilities in the production, processing and dissemination of basic economic data for the use of economic and social decision-makers and officials.

35. The activities conducted by ECA in this area mainly have to do with direct support to national statistical services and the training of African officials responsible for the production of economic statistics and the preparation of national accounts.

36. With regard, first, to direct support of national statistical services, short missions are conducted to the various countries by the specialist and the regional adviser in national accounts. These missions are fielded in order to help develop national capabilities in the processing of national accounts in accordance with the United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA) and to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the economic statistics needed to evaluate the economy and the national development plan. In most cases, these missions have helped national staff to prepare reliable national accounts. The main idea was to introduce such national staff to the various ways of preparing the accounts and processing them on micro computers. Six countries, namely: Togo, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea have benefitted from such assistance over the last two years. Follow-up missions are organized most of the time to help the countries implement the recommendations.

37. The missions fielded to English-speaking African countries for the purpose of helping with national accounts were limited in 1988 and 1989 to those undertaken by the regular budget staff of ECA's Statistics Division to such countries as Sierra Leone and the United Republic of Tanzania because, from February 1988 to November 1989, the post of the regional adviser in national accounts financed under the regular programme of the United Nations Department of Technical Cooperation for Development had been vacant. A total of about 20 missions were organized on basic economic statistics (including industrial statistics) and national accounts to 12 countries of the region during the last two years.

38. With regard to the training of national staff in national accounts the following forms have been adopted:

(a) On-the-job training carried out by the specialist or regional adviser in national accounts during mission travel, including training seminars and workshops at the national level;

(b) Advanced courses in national accounts provided by ECA in such STPA centres as IAMSEA in Kigali;

(c) The organization by ECA of working group, training seminars and workshops. Two such working group meetings have been held on the improvement of the basic economic statistics required for planning. They were held simultaneously in Addis Ababa in September 1986. One was for French-speaking African countries and the other was for English-speaking African countries; and

(d) The leading of seminars and workshops organized by African subregional organization or other institution for nationals of countries in the region. This was the case of the seminar on national accounts organized in November 1988 at Cotonou by the secretariat of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

4. Assistance to African countries in the preparation of statistical data bases

39. It should be pointed out that fourth component was added to the integrated project after discussions with UNDP, the funding agency. Indeed, it is recognized nowadays that statistical systems can not be harmoniously developed without the development of statistical data bases.

40. The objective pursued in this additional component of the integrated project is to provide assistance to countries of the region in the establishment of statistical data bases and the training of national staff in the use and maintenance of such bases.

41. With UNDP approval, a post of statistical data base specialist was financed for six months in 1987 by the Pan-African Documentation and Information System (PADIS) project and was subsequently included in the integrated SDPA project as of January 1988. Unfortunately, no budgetary provision has been made, as of the time of writing this paper, for financing the post beyond 31 December 1989. Because of this uncertainty, the incumbent of the post has secured a transfer to another project. It is to be hoped that the post will be maintained within the SDPA project on account

of the growing interest shown by countries of the region in the development of statistical data bases at the national level.

42. To date, activities in this area have focused mainly on the establishment, within those countries which have so requested (Algeria, the Congo and Morocco), of a statistical data base structured on the PADIS/STAT model developed by ECA and on the training of staff in the use of this data base. Eventually, assistance will be provided to help countries to develop their own statistical data bases taking their specific circumstances into account.

43. Finally, a training seminar on the use of software packages in statistical computering was organized for French-speaking officials working in their national statistical and planning services sometime in October 1988 in Addis Ababa.

IV. CONCLUSION

44. It should be recalled that the integrated SDPA project started only in July 1987. Consequently, it would be premature to attempt an accurate evaluation of its impact on the development of statistical systems in the Africa region.

45. It should, however, be mentioned that some positive results have already been achieved, in that, activities being carried out in statistical training, household survey, basic economic statistics and national accounts as well as the establishment of statistical data bases are being better co-ordinated. It is hoped that the links existing among the various areas of specialization will be strengthened in order to make for effective integration of statistical development activities in Africa.

46. The Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers is invited to:

(a) Make comments and suggestions concerning the integrated approach to statistical development in the region;

(b) Formulate observations and suggestions concerning the status of the various programmes supported by SDPA, in particular STPA, AHSCP, the programmes on basic economic statistics (including national accounts) and the development of statistical data bases; and

(c) Adopt, after due consideration, the reports and recommendations of the two meetings of the working group on the improvement of basic economic statistics required for development planning held in September 1988 and of the sixth meeting of Directors of Centres Participating in the Statistical Training Programme for Africa.